Exotic Wisterias

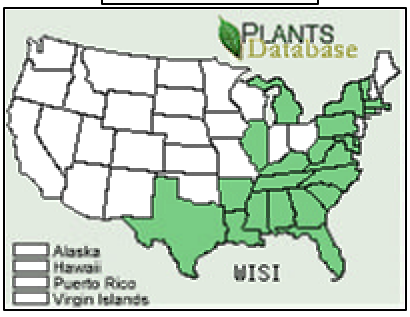
Chinese Wisteria *Wisteria sinensis* (Sims) DC.
Japanese Wisteria *Wisteria floribunda* (Willd.) DC.

DESCRIPTION: Chinese and Japanese wisteria are woody vines in the pea family, or Fabaceae. These vigorous vines can climb trees and reach up to 65 feet. Exotic wisterias flower in the springtime (April-May) and produce a velvety seed pod. The fuzzy brown seed pods are 4-6 inches long, narrowed toward the base, with constrictions between the seeds. Stems of the exotic wisterias can grow to 15 inches in diameter in older plants. White-barked Japanese wisteria vines twine clockwise around the host plant and Chinese wisteria twines counter-clockwise. The compound leaves, consisting of 7-13 (Chinese) or 13-19 (Japanese) smaller leaf units, called leaflets, are about 1 foot long and alternate along the stem. Fragrant, violet to blue-violet flowers, ½ to 1 inch long, occur in showy, pendulous clusters that hang gracefully from the twining stems.

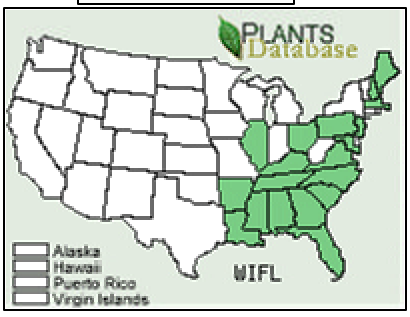
ECOLOGICAL THREAT: Exotic wisterias are long-lived, some vines surviving 50 years or more. Vegetative reproduction is their primary means of expansion. Vines impair and overtake native shrubs and trees through strangling or shading. Climbing wisteria vines can kill sizable trees, opening the forest canopy and increasing sunlight to the forest floor, which in turn favors its aggressive growth. Chinese and Japanese wisterias are hardy and aggressive, capable of forming thickets so dense that little else grows.

DISTRIBUTION AND HABITAT IN THE UNITED STATES:

Chinese Wisteria



Japanese Wisteria



Wisterias prefer full sun to partial shade. Vines climb surrounding vegetation and structures toward sunlight. Wisteria tolerates a variety of soil and moisture regimes but prefers loamy, deep, well drained soils. Infestations are commonly found along forest edges, roadsides, ditches, and rights-of-way. See green states on distribution maps.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: Mechanical and chemical control methods are recommended. **Cut** climbing or trailing vines close to the root collar for small populations then re-cut sprouts as necessary. **Grubbing,** removal of entire plants from the roots up, is appropriate for small initial populations or environmentally sensitive areas where herbicides cannot be used. **Cut stump treatment**, using a systemic **herbicide,** is effective in areas where vines are established within or around desirable native plants or where they have grown into the canopy. This treatment is effective as long as the ground is not frozen. Cut the stem as close to ground level as possible. Immediately apply a 25% solution of glyphosate (e.g., Roundup) or triclopyr (e.g., Garlon) and water to the cross section of the stem. Retreatment with a foliar application of glyphosate may be necessary for any sprouts. Ambient air temperature should be above 65ºF for all foliar treatments.

REFERENCES: www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/wist1.htm, http://plants.usda.gov